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Secretary of Defense William J. Perry will speak to the American Jewish Committee's 88th Annual Meeting/National Policy Luncheon on Friday, May 6, 1994, at 12:15 p.m.(EDT) at the Capitol Hilton, 16th and K St. NW, Washington, D.C. The event is open to the news media.

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SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY
REMARKS TO THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MAY 6, 1994

VOICE: Ladies and gentlemen, may I have your attention?

This is a working lunch devoted to critical issues in defense policy and it will be my great honor to introduce to you the obvious and preeminent speaker on that subject, the Secretary of Defense, Dr. William Perry.

We spoke this morning about bolstering democracy around the world and, however peaceful the world may appear in some quarters, there can be no doubt that the American defense establishment is one of the primary bolsters of democracy around the world.

Secretary Perry has had a distinguished career in business, academia and public service before he was confirmed as President Clinton's Secretary of Defense three months ago. He served most of the year as Deputy Secretary under Secretary Aspin. He is a mathematician. He was Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering in the Carter Administration. He's been associated for many years with Stanford University, teaching in its School of Engineering and co-directing its Center for International Security and Arms Control.

He has also run or founded a variety of private companies involved with high technology.

The Secretary has undertaken to speak to us for some minutes and then to answer some questions and so, without further elaboration, I would like to ask you to resist the temptation to eat, to give us a little silence, and now it is my pleasure to introduce to you the Secretary of Defense for the United States, Mr. Perry.

(Applause.)

Secretary Perry: Thank you very much. Thank you. Please be seated. It's bad enough you don't get to eat your salads but to have to stand, too, is too much.

I am really, really delighted to be here, to see some old friends in the audience and have a chance to renew acquaintance with them.

I'm going to start off with something that Thomas Paine said at the dawn of the American Revolution. He said, "We have it in our power to begin the world again."

With the ending of the Cold War, the formulation of American security policy, American defense structure, has to begin again. We not only have it in our power to do that, we have the need to do that. And so one of the most pressing issues which I face as the Secretary of Defense is dealing with this formulation, beginning the world again in national security after the Cold War.

I have, in my mind, organized that into three different objectives. The first of those is to prevent a drift back to the Cold War. The second is to reformulate a policy for the use and the threat of use of military power in those post-Cold War contingencies which we will face. And the third of those is to manage effectively the drawdown that is occurring inevitably in the post-Cold War era.

Let me talk about the first of these, which is preventing a drift back to the Cold War.

In my youth, I was called back from my job in California to Washington on an emergency call one day to assist in the analysis of some data we had gotten about new installations which were going into Cuba. And this was my first introduction to what became to be called "The Cuban Missile Crisis." This was before it was known publicly what was going on there. And I spent three weeks, every day and almost half the night, studying the data, analyzing it, and helping to prepare reports which went onto President Kennedy's desk the first thing in the morning giving him the status of what was going on in Cuba.

I have a very vivid recollection of my feeling at the time and it was that we were about to go into a war and we were about to go into a nuclear war. I thought that was the more than likely outcome of the events that I could see unfolding day by day.

I had detailed, technical understanding of what a nuclear bomb is and how it works and what it's consequences would be, so it made, as I said, a vivid impression on my consciousness which has lived with me ever since.

More generally, I have lived my entire adult life with a nuclear cloud hanging over my head, threatening the extinction of all of mankind and it has only been with the ending of the Cold War that that cloud has drifted away.

But that drifting away is still precarious and, therefore, my first objective, indeed, I believe the first policy objective of our country should be take every action we can take to prevent that from drifting back, to prevent a restart, a recurrence of the Cold War.

In Russia today and the other countries of the former Soviet Union, the political, economic and social reform that are underway there have a very uncertain outcome. In the late '30s, the Italian philosopher, Gramsky said, "The old is dying but the new cannot yet be born. And in the meantime, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

The morbid symptoms we see in Russia today and Ukraine and Belarus are a deeply divided political system, profoundly disaffected elite, political uncertainty, social dislocation and certainly political instability. Anybody that visits Russia or any of the surrounding countries today will see ample evidence of all of those problems of instability.

Meanwhile, this is happening in a country, Russia, which still has more than 20,000 nuclear weapons. Therefore, our policy in dealing with Russia has to take into account both the promise of the end of the Cold War and the danger of a recurrence.

Therefore, our efforts are directed, first of all, to doing what we can to prevent a recurrence and, secondly, trying to nail down in the meantime what gains that have already been made.

We are, for example, helping the Russians dismantle the nuclear weapons which they have agreed to dismantle. That's a major program in our Defense Department today, helping them dismantle their nuclear weapons. We are helping them convert the defense industry and we are helping to reform the former Red Army so that it is capable of operating under democratic government with civilian leadership.

To the extent we can accomplish any or all of these objectives, we are promoting a safer and more secure world for the Russians and for ourselves. We call this policy one of pragmatic partnership. It is indeed a partnership.

We have to work together with Russia to make this happen. We cannot do it by ourselves and they cannot do it by themselves. We cannot control the outcome in Russia today but we can influence it and we must try.

During my visit to Russia last month to promote these policies, I also took some opportunity to see the success of activity we had already initiated in that direction. And I asked President Kravchuk when I was visiting him in Kiev whether I might go to the Pervomaysk missile site.

Pervomaysk is the location of an operational ICBM site which has the most modern and the most capable ICBMs and which was the subject of an agreement made by President Clinton, President Kravchuk and President Yeltsin in Moscow in January, the so-called trilateral accord, where they agreed to dismantle all of the nuclear weapons on those missiles. And this was supposed to have been underway already, so I asked President Kravchuk if I could go down to see it and he agreed.

So, I and the Ukranian Minister of Defense, General Radetsky, went to Pervomaysk. They took me down into the control center, twelve stories underground, and there were two young Russian officers manning the controls there and they went through the entire missile check-out sequence for me, which is what they go through just before they launch the missiles.

And these two young men at this control site were capable of launching missiles that had 800 warheads, all of them aimed at the United States. They had the capability to destroy every major city in the United States, two young men in one room. That was a stunning experience, to stand there and watch this check-out take place.

We went from there then out to the silos where the missiles were and they took me out and they had the silo lid lifted up and I stood -- I have a marvelous picture of this -- looking down into the silo, and there was an SS-24 which is the most recent and the most modern ICBM. The missile was still sitting there but all of the warhead had been removed.

And, indeed, the week before, they had been shipped, taken off and shipped, to the dismantlement factory where they are going to be taken apart and the fissile material then, which was the remaining active ingredient, we had agreed to buy and to convert it into material which could be used for nuclear power reactors.

This is what in the Defense Department we call "defense by other means." This is, by all odds, the best way of dealing with those nuclear warheads which are pointed at the United States.

I went from there to the city of Dnepropetrovsk, which is where the SS-18 ICBM was manufactured. And those of you who have followed the strategic weapons issues of the Cold War will know that the SS-18 is famous for having launched the American SDI program. It was our frustration in not being able to deal with the threat posed by the SS-18 ICBM that President Reagan announced the initiation of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

So, I went to Dnepropetrovsk and there was this huge factory and a manager came out and took me in. We went down to what at one time was the assembly line for the SS-18 and now in this same line they are manufacturing electric buses. And, somehow, I thought that was, from our point of view, a very positive development. And anything we could do to encourage them to manufacture more electric buses and fewer SS-18s I thought was a step forward.

Now, that was the good news. The bad news was that at this plant they had 46,000 workers and they were having a very difficult time occupying the 46,000 workers with the electric buses that they were manufacturing and they were desperately seeking ways of finding other commercial products on which they could work. And some of our Defense Department resources is going to the task of helping the conversion of this massive defense industry in Russia, particularly that part of it which is involved in weapons of mass destruction.

The second objection, which I have emblazoned in my mind as what I should be trying to do as Secretary of Defense, is to reformulate a policy for the use and the threat of use of military power in post-Cold War contingencies which by definition have limited policy objectives.

In all of the situations with which I have had an opportunity to consider in which military can be used have been ambiguous. Now, compare that with World War II where we used all the power we had to achieve an objective which was simple to state and simple to understand. It was all-out victory. Indeed, in the second World War we were willing to use and did use even nuclear weapons to achieve that objective.

Now the problems we are faced with are very different and the thing which is fundamentally different about them is they do not threaten the national survival of the United States. Therefore, they are in our national interests but they are not in our supreme national interests.

And, therefore, as we look at these, these regional wars with which we're confronted, the involvement in peacekeeping and humanitarian operations around

the world, where our military forces are involved, each of them is different, each of them is "sui generis." But they all have one thing in common and that is that they have limited political objectives and, therefore, the use or the threat of use of military force has to be very selective.

That's true of every war and every peacekeeping operation with which we've been involved since the second World War, including the Korean War, including the Vietnam War. In none of those cases did we use all of the military force which we were capable of using.

Recently, in the streets of Mogadishu, the question was did we have enough military force there. Wrong question. We had enough military force there and in the theater that we could have destroyed the city of Mogadishu but that was not our objective. We had a very limited objective in Mogadishu, which was to deliver humanitarian aid. And to the extent military power could facilitate that objective, we used it. And to the extent that military power became counterproductive in achieving that, we withdrew it.

We are in Bosnia today using limited military power for very limited political objectives. Some of you in this room might think that our political objectives are too limited. Some of you may be confused about what our political objectives are. Let me state them as clearly as I can. You may disagree with them but you ought to understand them. And then, understanding them, you can fairly assess whether we're using not enough, too much or just right military force.

Let me say what our objective in Bosnia is not, first of all. It is not to become a combatant in the war, to win a military victory. Some of you may believe it should be but it is not that today.

Now, what it is is first of all, to take every action we can take to accelerate the agreement on the cessation of hostilities and then, finally the agreement and finally, the establishment of a peace agreement.

And the second objective, understanding that this first objective may take some months, the second objective is to limit the violence and casualty to the extent that we can. And, in particular, to limit the civilian casualties that have taken place.

Those are our objectives.

Now, to what extent can military power play a role in that?

If our objective was to enter the war as a combatant and win the war, we would do that. I will tell you it would not be done with the limited air power we are flying today. We would send in ground power and we would send in substantial ground power and there's no question we have the ground power capable of doing that.

What we have instead is the issue of what can we do to promote the peace agreement and to limit the civilian casualties. We are doing three things in that regard.

We have put our airplanes as part of a NATO air force in Italy and in the Adriatic Sea and they have three objectives. The first is to stop the aerial bombardment of cities and we do that by enforcing a no-fly zone. We do not allow aircraft to fly in Bosnia, military aircraft to fly in Bosnia.

For the last year, we have been enforcing that objective and during that period of time, there was only one attempt to bomb a city and we stopped that attempt while it was underway and shot down three of the aircraft that were trying to do it. Since then, there has been no repetition of the Serbians using their air force to try to bomb cities.

The second objective we have is to stop the artillery bombardment of cities. We applied that first in Sarajevo successfully, then we applied it in Garazda and, most recently, have applied it in four other safe areas and are considering, as we speak, the possibility of extending that to the Berzko area.

And, finally, we are using our air force, the NATO air force there, about half of which is U.S., to assist the U.N. ground forces in their humanitarian and peacekeeping operations and we do this by providing close air support when called upon. That has been called upon twice and both of them in Garazda where the point of the request was to support U.N. forces there and it was an attack in response to a U.N. request and at the level that they responded.

I might say that when we established Garazda as a no bombardment zone, and that happened about a few weeks ago, that we were prepared to enforce that and enforce it in a very robust fashion. And had the Serbian artillery not ceased the shelling and backed off, we were prepared to send a very large fleet of aircraft in and it would have done substantial damage.

The second problem that I would like to cite as one of our post-Cold War problems we are considering today is North Korea. In North Korea, we have been confronted for decades with a very large North Korean army based very close to the

border. In the last few years, the army has gotten larger and the forward deployment has gotten greater to where today there are more than a million men in that army and two-thirds of them are based within 60 miles of the DMZ, which in turn depending on where you are may be 50 or 60 miles or even less from Seoul.

This army has large quantities of artillery, large quantities of tank, more than the combined U.S.-South Korean forces. It has built huge tunnels under the DMZ and has large numbers of special operations forces. So this large army poses a substantial threat to South Korea, has for years but the threat has gotten more intense in the last few years.

Nevertheless, the combined U.S. and South Korean forces plus the reinforcements we could bring in are readily capable of defeating this North Korean army and so therefore there has been continual deterrence of any invasion from the north.

In the last few years, this problem has been aggravated by the emergence of a nuclear weapon program in North Korea. There has been much discussion and much debate about this program. Let me just summarize very briefly what it is we know about it.

We know that they have a nuclear reactor, a 25-megawatt nuclear reactor, which has been operational for a number of years. We know that they have a larger, 200-megawatt, reactor which is under construction. They have a large reprocessing plant which is capable of taking the spent fuel from the reactor and converting it into weapons grade plutonium. They have radio chemical laboratories and they have high explosive tests, so I cannot come up with a reasonable explanation of these facilities which we know about other than as the front end of a significant nuclear weapons program.

I cannot describe to you what the back end of this program is. You need not have special facilities and they need not be easily distinguishable facilities that would take a small amount of weapons grade plutonium and convert it into a nuclear bomb. We believe they have the capability to do that and the will to do it but we don't have the concrete evidence precisely of what they've done or how many they have made.

Now, the other thing we know about the program is that some time a few years ago they took some spent fuel from that reactor and processed it and we believe that they processed enough to make perhaps one nuclear bomb and we further believe they probably went ahead to make that bomb. And we also know that as we speak they are in the process of removing the fuel from that nuclear

reactor and that we believe that there's enough fuel in that reactor to make four or five nuclear bombs if they proceed with the steps that they have underway right now.

So we are at this very moment, we have an intense discussion between ourselves and South Korea on the one hand and North Korea on the other hand and North Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency trying to gain control over that process and, in particular, trying to get authority to send an IAEA inspection team in to inspect that operation so they can provide assurances to the world community that that fuel was not diverted into a nuclear weapon program.

If, by the way, we are successful in that, that will be a major step forward. If we are not successful in that, then we are moving towards sanctions against North Korea. And you may think sanctions is a modest diplomatic step to take. I tell you the North Koreans do not think it is a modest step to take. They have already stated that they would consider sanctions equivalent to a declaration of war. So we are approaching a very dangerous situation in North Korea today.

I visited South Korea and Japan last week in order to review with those two governments their assessment of the threat and their assessment of what it was we should be doing about it so that we could gain solidarity on how proceeded forward. There is nothing that we can do about the North Korea problem that we can do independently of South Korea and, indeed, we also need the support of Japan.

I came away from that visit with two very important conclusions. The first is that we do have full solidarity with the governments of South Korea and Japan about the nature of the threat and how we should respond to it. And, secondly, I had an opportunity to review in some detail the military forces we and the South Koreans have there and the plans, contingency plans, we have for reinforcement. And I come away with a very high level of confidence that we are prepared for any military emergency that may develop on the Korean Peninsula.

Having said that, let me conclude on the Korean issue by saying I do not believe that a war is imminent in the Korean Peninsula and I am not suggesting to you that a war is imminent. We are proceeding on this problem with diplomatic initiatives but at the same time we're taking the diplomatic initiatives we are taking a number of steps to enhance our readiness, our military preparedness in that area.

Those actions in and of themselves are considered provocative by the North Koreans. We sent the Patriot missiles over there and that was considered provocative. We have sent Apaches to improve the capability of our military forces

there. We are taking extensive measures, so-called counter-battery, counter-artillery measures, to deal with the threat posed by the North Korean artillery.

We think that these are actions we must take responsibly and we are doing it but they do raise the risk. And we have to compare the risk of taking those actions versus the risk of doing nothing and being confronted with a situation two or three years from now which has all of the elements of threat which I've mentioned to you before plus a dozen or so nuclear bombs. And my judgment is that we take the risk now and that's the policy on which we are proceeding.

Now, I have one third objective which I am not going to discuss much with you today but it is a very important objective to me and it occupies a lot of our time at the Pentagon and that is to manage the drawdown properly. Between 1986 and 1996 we will have 40 percent reduction in the defense budget in real terms. That is, we will have 40 percent fewer resources to work on in the mid '90s than we had in the mid '80s.

This is the third major drawdown we've had since the second World War. The first one, which was immediately after the second World War, we went from arguable the greatest army that had ever been assembled in the world to an army which five years later was almost pushed off the Korean Peninsula by a third-rate regional power. And we can safely conclude, I think, that that drawdown was not done appropriately.

After the Vietnam War, we also went through a drawdown, about the same magnitude as the one we're going through now. In 1979, Shi Meyer, who was the chief of staff for the Army at the time, proclaimed that we had a hollow army. And he was right because what we did, the way we managed that drawdown was we decided that we had to maintain the force structure, the number of people in the armed services, and so when you have a 30 or 40 percent reduction in resources and you're trying to keep the same number of people, you do not have to be a military genius to predict what the outcome would be. We had the same number of forces five years later but they had lost much of their capability to fight. We did not have the money for the exercise and the training or the proper equipment for equipping the forces.

So now we're going through the third drawdown and this time we've got to get it right. We are well launched in that direction, I believe. We made the first really painful decision and that is that we were going to cut force structure and maintain readiness.

That is to say whatever size our military force was, person for person and unit for unit, it would be at a high level of training and a high level of effectiveness.

How do we manifest that? I don't out as Secretary of Defense and fix the engines when they break in our airplanes, I allocate resources. And the best evidence I can give you that I am serious about that objective I stated is in the '95 budget. In the '95 budget which is the first budget which I could influence primarily, we took the force structure down 7 percent and we increased the amount of money for operations and maintenance 6 percent. And that is my way of manifesting the objective of bringing the force structure down but maintaining a very high level of readiness and effectiveness for each individual unit and each individual person in the armed forces.

That will be the test by which we will be measured at the end of this drawdown, is whether we have been able to maintain a high level of readiness for these forces.

One other thing we have to do to deal with this drawdown adequately is to completely change the way we buy equipment. The cliche term for this in the Defense Department is we must reform our defense acquisition system. We have developed a system which is unique, there's nothing like it in the world, and it is an appropriate system when we were buying $100 billion worth of equipment a year. We could create an industry and have that industry serve just us. And the buying practices we have require the people to serve us, to serve just us, because they are so counterproductive that those companies cannot work effectively in supplying other needs.

So as a consequence, then, we have concluded we have to change our buying practices to make them more like commercial buying practices so that the companies can more effectively serve both defense and industrial clients and so that we as the buyer can have access to that whole set of companies out there, those who supply defense companies and those who supply commercial companies as well.

I would like to conclude and turn over to questions with a favorite quote from Graham Greene. He said, "There always comes a moment in time when a door opens and lets the future in." The ending of the Cold War has opened such a door and the future is out there waiting to come in. Our task, my task as Secretary of Defense, is to shape that future as it comes in so that we like the outcome of this future world.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

VOICE: I think it's evident the gratitude that the American Jewish Committee and all of its members feel for that exceptionally thoughtful survey of problems that would try any wise man's mind. I must say to have a Secretary of Defense who can travel from Gramsky to Greene and Paine is a reassurance at a time when one wants an exceptionally thoughtful man at the helm and I think we think we have one.

The Secretary has offered to answer some questions and if you will raise your hands, I'll try and recognize some hands. I'll try one in the front and then one in the back.

Mr. Ramer?

Q: Mr. Secretary, I'm Bruce Ramer from Los Angeles. Two short questions dealing with the Korean Peninsula. First, you failed to make mention of China and perhaps you would enlighten us on the Chinese involvement and how the government and you in particular will deal with China with respect to North Korea. And, secondly, when you talk of deterrence with respect to the South Korean and American armies in South Korea, does that include nuclear deterrence?

A: On the first question, ultimately what the Chinese will do relative to the problems we're facing in North Korea will be based on how they perceive their national interests in the Korean Peninsula. Based on my discussions with Chinese officials and also discussions I've had with Prime Minister Hata and President Kim, both of whom have had discussions with senior Chinese officials on this question, the Chinese interest is two-fold. First of all, they do not want North Korea to have a nuclear weapon program. They have stated that publicly. They have also stated it privately. I tend to believe them on that statement. Secondly, and very clearly, they do not want a military confrontation on the Korean Peninsula. China's primary interest today is in developing their economy and they've been spectacularly successful in doing that and they have a large and growing business trade and technology transfer with South Korea. So the last thing they want to see happen is that all disrupted. In getting down to specifics, would they support us on a particular initiative, for example, if we go to the United Nations and request sanctions, where would China come out, I cannot forecast that to you with confidence. I believe they have the same objectives that we have, they may end up with very different tactics about how to achieve those objectives. The word they keep telling us when they speak with American officials, agreeing with us about what we're trying to do but saying we must be more patient in dealing with North Korea and I would characterize our policy with North Korea as patient but firm and I'm not sure they would go the second step on that. In terms of the use of nuclear

weapons, the United States has never foresworn the right to use nuclear weapons on future circumstances which it can really not predict. But I believe that our conventional forces, combined with the South Korean conventional forces, are entirely capable of defeating any attack from the north.

Q: Mr. Secretary, my name is George Youngerman. I'm from Marin County, California. I'd like your opinion. It seems that with the end of the Cold War that the United States has taken the role of being a peacekeeper around the world and our forces and our air force seems to be in every troubled spot that has occurred. What troubles me as a younger American is that seems that our trading partners with whom we have a tremendous balance, particularly in Japan and Germany and some of the other countries, do not seem to be carrying their weight in helping to maintain a peaceful environment that all of us benefit from. You mentioned in Korea how Japan was consulted on the possibility of North Korea's army crossing the border and I would think that that would affect Japan a lot more than it would America and I'd just to know your opinion, what your feeling is about their country's participation from a resource and manpower point of view.

A: With both Germany and Japan, there is a tension between the objectives that we posed for those two countries after the second World War of developing non-militaristic societies and not projecting their self-defense forces outside their boundaries. And both countries, partly as a consequence of our insistence in earlier years, have constitutional or legal limitations which either prohibit or very substantially limit their ability to use military forces or even send military equipment to be used in these kind of operations. Those countries are going through a substantial reappraisal right now on the belief that they should change those so that they could be involved more in the international -- particularly international peacekeeping operations and, at the same time, both countries are expressing an interest in becoming members of the Security Council, the U.N. Security Council, which would almost imply taking on those kind of responsibilities. I can't forecast to you how that's going to come out. I do expect to see legal changes and probably constitutional changes in both Germany and Japan over the next year or so which would greatly increase their ability to participate in international peacekeeping operations and be a more vigorous security partner.

VOICE: We're going to just have -- no more than the people who are now standing so that we could even feed our guest and I hope you will restrain yourselves while we hear a few more questions.

George Sabot in the front here.

Q: Mr. Secretary, what responsibility, or to put it more broadly, what is our policy to either independently or as part of the international community in the

prosecution of war crimes committed in areas of what you call our limited national interests?

VOICE: Maybe we'll take a few questions, if that's all right with you, and then the Secretary could answer them collectively, if you will. Why don't we finish in the front?

Q: My is (inaudible). Mr. Secretary, I would like to ask, the first step in Eastern Europe is Partnership for Peace. There are rumors then from the second step is accepting to NATO, Slovakia is excluded. Could you confirm or --

Secretary Perry: Could you ask that question again? I didn't catch all of it.

Q: That for Eastern Europe, the first step is the Partnership for Peace. Peace was signed by Slovakia as well. But Slovakia has a very bad image. The reality is much better but the image is bad. We know that. The life there is normal. I would like to ask whether the rumors that Slovakia will be excluded from the second step, accepting entrance to NATO, or it's only rumors. Thank you.

VOICE: Larry Thorpe.

Q: Larry Thorpe from Atlanta, Georgia, Mr. Secretary. For this audience, I wonder if you could specifically comment on how you see the current strategic relationship with Israel and whether it's manifested any changes because of changes in the world political situation?

VOICE: There's one in the back and that will conclude it, so let's take the gentleman in the back.

Q: Mr. Secretary, American position --

VOICE: Give us your name, please.

Q: Yes. Emmanuel Vigorous, Lithuania. American position for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Baltic countries and a guarantee for the for the next step, to get them to join NATO.

Secretary Perry: Those are difficult questions. Are you sure we don't have the Washington press corps asking these questions?

(Laughter.)

Secretary Perry: In terms of Slovakia and the Partnership for Peace, Slovakia and the others, we expect Slovakia and the other central European nations to join the Partnership for Peace. And that is as the questioner indicated a first step but that's a first and a very important step. That is going to involve joint exercises, joint training, exchange of equipment, learning how to work together and communicate with other in a military force so that we can operate jointly in international peacekeeping forces.

For many of the countries in the Partnership for Peace they are looking forward to a second step which is joining NATO. My forecast is that none of these countries will probably be joining NATO within perhaps the next two years. There is a fair amount of development time. This is not just a trial marriage, so to speak, but it takes time for these countries to develop the capability so that they bring something to NATO as well as getting some benefit from it. But I should think that within a few years that all of these countries, including Slovakia, would be strong candidates for membership in NATO. And I have heard nothing to substantiate the rumor and I would disbelieve the rumor that there's any negative bias on Slovakia. I would think quite the contrary, that Slovakia would be among the first list of countries that might be considered for appropriate membership in NATO.

On the strategic relationship with Israel, my assessment is it is as strong as it has ever been and I believe all of you or most of you probably heard Secretary Christopher's talk last night and he briefed myself and Tony Lake and the president this morning on the talks that he had just returned from as part of his shuttle diplomacy.

My forecast from what I heard there, and you can draw your own opinion, is that the strategic relationship is going to deepen as a result of that activity in the future.

(Applause.)

Secretary Perry: On the question on the Baltics, two of those countries now already have agreements from the Russians to pull out. If I remember right, they're dated August 31st, in any event, some time late summer, early fall. And I would hope that the third country will follow at about the same timeframe and so that we will have the Baltic nations without Russian troops by this fall.

When that happens, these nations should become full members of the Partnership for Peace and the Partnership for Peace has a certain implicit security connection that comes with it. I should emphasize it is not explicit security guarantee. That is, nothing in the Partnership for Peace resembles a treaty like we

have with NATO and NATO, that is a treaty and if any member nation is attacked, all the other member nations agree to come to their aid. That is not included in the Partnership for Peace, but nevertheless there is a very important security assurance, I believe, that comes from the Partnership for Peace membership.

At some time in the future were the Baltic nations to become members of NATO, then they would be covered by that security blanket and I would not venture a forecast as to whether that would happen or when that might happen.

On the war crimes in Bosnia question, I cannot give you a definitive statement about what positions, what actions the U.S. Government might take in that area. I can give you my personal view, that war crimes have been committed in Bosnia, and also my personal opinion that those -- when you can demonstrate who committed those crimes that those people should be held accountable.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

VOICE: Again, thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. You have given us a lot of food for thought with these very thoughtful remarks and I think it's time we gave you some food of the other sort.

Immediately after we eat, which we will do briskly, Al Moses will introduce the second part of this program devoted to the progress of the peace process in the Middle East and we will then hear from the Director General of the Israel Foreign Ministry.

Thank you.